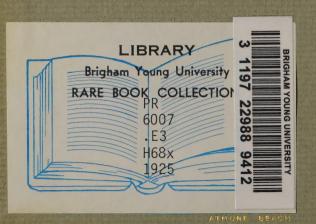
CHRISTMAS FOLDER







CHRISTMAS

The Hostage.

By WALTER DE LA MARE.

IN DEAD OF DARK to the starry North
St. Nicholas drew near;
He had ranged the World this wintry night,
His elk-bells jangling clear.
Now bitter-worn with age was he,
And weary of Mankind, for few
Had shown him love or courtesy.

His sacks lay empty—all save one;
And this to h.s affright
Stirred as he stooped with fingers numb,
Ablaze with hoar-frost bright.
Aghast he stood. Showed fumbling thumb,
Small shoulder, a wing: What stowaway
Was this, and whence was't come?

And out there crept a lovely Thing—
Half angel and half child:—

"I, youngest of all Heaven, am here,
To be thy Joy," he smiled.

"O Nicholas, our Master Christ
Thy grief hath seen; and He
Hath bidden me come to keep His tryst,
And bring His love to thee;
To serve thee well, and sing, Nowell,
And thine own son to be."





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